

2019

Shetland Islands Regional Marine Plan (SIRMP)

SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL
ENVIRONMENT REPORT-NON TECHNICAL SUMMARY

This report has been prepared by the NAFC Marine Centre on behalf of the Shetland Islands Regional Marine Planning Partnership.

Funding for the Regional Marine Planning Partnership is provided by Marine Scotland and Shetland Islands Council.

Copyright © NAFC Marine Centre UHI 2019. All Rights Reserved

NAFC Marine Centre UHI is the trading name of the Shetland Fisheries Training Centre Trust, Scottish Charity Number SC003715.

1. INTRODUCTION

This Non-Technical Summary provides an overview of the findings presented in the Environment Report undertaken as part of a combined Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) and Sustainability Appraisal (SA) for the draft Shetland Islands Regional Marine Plan (SIRMP). The SEA aims to integrate environmental considerations into the decision making process for the Plan. SA differs from SEA in that it gives greater consideration to socio-economic services provided by the ecosystem. The combined report will assess the effects of the policies within the SIRMP against the SEA/SA objectives and identify opportunities to mitigate any adverse effects.

The SIRMP area includes all territorial waters seaward of the Mean High Water Spring Tide (MHWS), out to 12nm but gives consideration to terrestrial features that are clearly affected by marine use. The area is equivalent to 12 305 km² (7 645 miles²), approximately seven times the land area of the Shetland Islands.

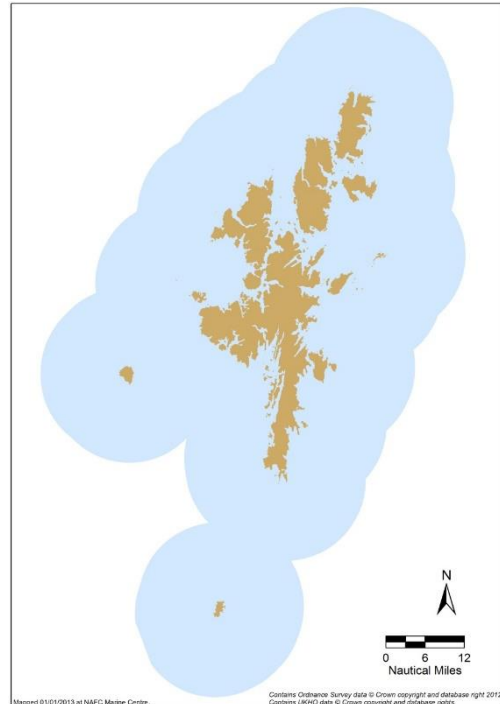


Figure 1.1: Shetland Islands Regional Marine Plan (SIRMP) Area

2. WHAT IS THE SHETLAND ISLANDS REGIONAL MARINE PLAN?

The Draft SIRMP builds upon the 4th Edition of the Shetland Islands' Marine Spatial Plan (SIMSP)¹ which was adopted as Supplementary Guidance (SG) to the Shetland Islands Council's (SIC) Local Development Plan (LDP)² in 2015.

The SIRMP sits beneath the National marine Plan (NMP)³ and alongside the other local strategies and plans such as the Shetland Islands Council (SIC) Local Development Plan (LDP) and the Shetland and Orkney River Basin Management Plans⁴.

The SIRMP brings together authoritative spatial data on the marine and coastal environment and its various uses. It establishes an overarching policy framework to guide the placement of marine development. The SIRMP's planning guidance provides a firm basis for rational and consistent decision making and allows developers to make future decisions with greater knowledge. The SIRMP reflects a process of ongoing consultation with marine planners, regulators, communities and developers.

¹ [NAFC Marine Centre. 2014. A Marine Spatial Plan for the Shetland Islands. \(4th Edition\)](#)

² [Shetland Islands Council \(2014\) Local Development Plan](#)

³ [Scottish Government. 2015. Scotland's National Marine Plan. A Single Framework for Managing Our Seas.](#)

⁴ www.sepa.org.uk

The SIRMP sets out a vision, an overall aim and a suite of objectives for the management of Shetland's marine environment. The aims and objectives align with the shared vision of the UK and Scottish Governments, as set out in the UK Marine Policy Statement⁵ and National Marine Plan (NMP).

The SIRMP's high-level aims are to:

- Ensure a high quality, fully functioning marine and coastal ecosystem for the health, benefit, and prosperity of local communities;
- Protect and enhance the local marine waters and coastal environment particularly where there are regionally, nationally, or internationally important marine biodiversity and geodiversity features whilst taking account of natural changes;
- Identify the differing priorities for sustainable use (such as fishing, aquaculture, recreation & tourism, marine renewables, nature conservation etc.) in consultation with marine stakeholders; and
- Promote sustainable economic marine development.

Policies included in the SIRMP will be the means of achieving the vision and objectives of the SIRMP and subsequently the high-level objectives of the NMP which are to provide clean and safe, healthy, and productive marine waters around Shetland.

The Policy Framework in the SIRMP will be presented in three sections as follows:

- a) Clean and Safe;
- b) Healthy and Biologically Diverse; and
- c) Productive.

Proposed developments will have to adhere to **all** the policies in the first two policy sections:

- a) Clean and Safe; and
- b) Healthy and Biologically Diverse.

before considering their relevant development sector within:

- c) Productive policies.

3. WHAT IS SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL?

This report summarises the findings from a Sustainability Report (SA) of the draft SIRMP. An SA is required under the [Environmental Assessment \(Scotland\) Act 2005](#) to assess the likelihood of any environmental or socio-economic effects occurring due to the policies within the SIRMP. The assessment indicates the benefits and potential impacts of implementing the Plan, including the cumulative effects of the Plan alongside other plans such as the Shetland Islands Council's Local Development Plan (SIC LDP).

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is important for achieving sustainable development, establishing important methods for protecting the environment and creating opportunities for public participation in decision making. SEA achieves this by:

- Systematically assessing and monitoring the significant environmental effects of public sector strategies, plans and programmes;

⁵ [HM Government. 2011. UK Marine Policy Statement. HM Government, Northern Ireland Executive, Scottish Government and Welsh Assembly Government.](#)

- Ensuring that expertise and views are sought at various points in the process from SNH, SEPA, Historic Environment Scotland (statutory consultees) and the public; and
- Requiring a public statement as to how opinions have been taken into account.

4. WHAT IS THE CURRENT STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT?

The coastal waters around Shetland have been classified as being in ‘good environmental status’. In 2009 Shetland became a UNESCO European Geopark based on its exceptional geological heritage.

Shetland’s Coasts and seas are an integral part of Shetland’s cultural and historic heritage with many structures visible around the coast and many more submerged beneath the sea.

Shetlands natural environment is rich in diversity with the landscape spread over more than a hundred islands and 2 702 km of coastline. As a result of this diversity of habitats, wildlife and landscape/seascape significant areas are protected by international and national environmental designations. Additionally, these assets and the actual marine environment represent an important recreational amenity for the local community and local economy.

Baseline information on the current status of Shetland’s marine environment and key environmental issues has been collated within the ‘Shetland Islands Marine Region State of Environment Assessment’ (SoEA)⁶ which was published in July 2017.

The SoEA is divided into sections to correspond with the UK High Level Marine Objective to deliver ‘clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse oceans and seas’. The ‘condition of the region’ has been assessed under the headings ‘clean and safe’ and ‘healthy and biologically diverse’ and looks at how well ecosystem services are functioning and identifies commercial, recreational or community activities that may be dependent on those services. The ‘productive’ section of the SoEA analyses key economic and spatial data concerning human activities.

5. HOW WAS THE SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL UNDERTAKEN?

A series of guiding questions (‘sustainability appraisal objectives’) were used to structure the assessment. Information about the existing marine environment has been used to inform the appraisal and define these appraisal objectives. The appraisal identifies the environmental and socio-economic, individual and cumulative effects of the policies in the SIRMP on the marine and coastal environment against the guiding questions for each SA Topic:

- Soils, Geology and Coastal Processes
- Cultural Heritage
- Landscape and Seascape
- Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna
- Air
- Waste
- Water
- Climatic Factors

⁶ Shucksmith, RJ (2017) Shetland Islands Marine Region State of the Marine Environment Assessment. NAFC Marine Centre UHI. Report for the Shetland Islands Marine Planning Partnership. pp172

- Population and Human Health
- Economy
- Material Assets

The type and duration of the effects will be investigated as part of the SA as follows:

- Positive and negative effects;
- Short, medium and long term effects;
- Permanent and temporary effects; and
- Secondary, cumulative and synergistic effects.

The findings have been recorded in a series of tables and the significant impacts are described in detail in Chapter 5 of the Sustainability Appraisal Report.

6. WHICH REASONABLE ALTERNATIVES HAVE BEEN ASSESSED?

There is a requirement to consider the appropriate alternatives to the SIRMP, the policies within it and their effect on the environment as part of the SA process. As the SIRMP does not include specific strategic actions or measurable activities, the focus of the SA is to assess the main objectives and policies as set out in the SIRMP and incorporate policy revisions or alternatives upon which the final SIRMP will be based.

Three alternative approaches were identified:

- a) 'Do-nothing' scenario, i.e. continue under the current approach to management including using the SIMSP as supplementary guidance to the Shetland Islands Council's LDP;
- b) Use the policies within the SIMSP to form a regional marine plan without update or additions; or
- c) Adoption of the SIRMP after a review and update of policies guided by the public consultation and the SEA process, further consultation with key stakeholders.

7. WHAT ARE THE LIKELY SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS OF THE SIRMP?

The assessment of the SIRMP is presented in full in Chapter 5 of the Sustainability Appraisal Report.

The assessment concludes that the SIRMP will result in positive overall environmental and socio-economic benefits particularly in relation to factors such as benefits to biodiversity, geology, water quality, cultural heritage, landscape and seascape, population and human health and the economy.

There is the potential for small scale local negative impacts on the marine environment predominantly from policies within Policy Framework Section (c) 'Productive' however these impacts will normally be temporary and localised during construction activities. In addition all the 'Productive' policies specify the all potential marine developments must comply with all policies in Policy Framework Sections (a) and (b) and policy MP DEV1 and often include avoidance and mitigation criteria.

The implementation of the SIRMP will ensure that sustainability is a key consideration in decision making for marine development in Shetland, taking into consideration the environment and socio-economic elements.

8. WHAT ARE THE LIKELY CUMULATIVE EFFECTS OF THE SIRMP WITH OTHER PLANS?

Cumulative effects can be defined as effects that occur where several individual activities which each may not have a significant effect, combine to have a significant effect. Professional judgement has been used to derive the potential cumulative effects of the policies within the SIRMP, in-combination with other plans or projects.

Within the SA there was a focus on the cumulative effects of the policies within the SIRMP, the National Marine Plan (NMP) and the Shetland Islands Council Local Development Plan (SIC LDP).

The SIRMP sits beneath the NMP and alongside the LDP. Together the NMP and SIRMP set out a framework for social, economic and environmental policies which identify the issues to be taken into account when making decisions about projects and/or activities in the marine environment.

The SIRMP and the SIC LDP work together to set out a framework of social, economic and environmental policies which identify the issues to be taken into account when making decisions about projects and/or activities in the marine and terrestrial environments.

The cumulative effect of this policy framework is that economic growth is supported, focusing on the right type of development in the right place. The policy frameworks work to avoid the potential adverse effects of development on European sites, in both coastal and marine environments.

9. HOW CAN THESE EFFECTS BE AVOIDED OR REDUCED?

Schedule 3 (8) of the [Environmental Assessment \(Scotland\) Act 2005](#) requires that mitigation measures are integrated into the plan making process. The policies within the SIRMP have been designed to, where possible, incorporate environmental protection and best environmental practice. Mitigation measures have been built into each policy and developers are directed to key consultees who can provide guidance and best practice guidelines. It is strongly advised that developers consult with these agencies early in the application process.

As the assessment did not identify any significant effects arising from the SIRMP, the focus of further monitoring will be on unanticipated effects. The Marine Planning Partnership will continue to work closely with the Statutory Consultees and the Shetland Islands Marine Region Advisory Group to ensure that applications for future development follow the guidance provided in the SIRMP.

10. HOW WILL THE EFFECTS OF THE SIRMP BE MONITORED?

A formal review will be conducted within 5 years of the SIRMP being adopted. The review will look at how the SIRMP is being used and will monitor and appraise the environmental and socio-economic effects of the implementation of the SIRMP and how it can be improved.

The use of 'indicators' to measure how the environmental baseline has altered will be an effective tool in determining change. Indicators can comprise both quantitative (facts and figures) and qualitative (descriptive) information. The indicators selected will monitor change that results from implementing the Plan, but will also take account of changes as a result of other external factors. They will therefore provide a mechanism to highlight unforeseen as well as expected changes.

11. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Following the consultation, the draft SIRMP will be revised in response to comments made on the draft SIRMP and the Sustainability Appraisal Report. The final SIRMP will then be submitted to the Scottish Ministers for consideration. The SIRMP will then be adopted and a Post-Adoption Statement published. The Post-Adoption statement will explain how issues raised in the Sustainability Appraisal and associated views in response to the consultation, have been addressed.

12. HOW TO RESPOND TO CONSULTATION?

The publication of the draft SIRMP and the Sustainability Appraisal Environmental Report will be followed by a 16 week consultation period. Views on the SA report and the draft SIRMP to which it relates to are now invited.

Copies of the draft SIRMP and the accompanying documents, including this report will be available on the [NAFC Marine Centre Marine Spatial Planning Website](#) and hard copies are available for viewing within office hours at the NAFC Marine Centre (Port Arthur, Scalloway, Shetland, ZE1 0UN). The SA report will also be uploaded onto the SEA Gateway.

Please send any comments to the Marine Spatial Planning Team at the NAFC Marine Centre at the above address or email: marineplan@uhi.ac.uk